

# PRESS RELEASE

**Congressman John Conyers, Jr.**

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Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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## **CONYERS: "WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SURPLUS: FROM ECONOMIC RICHS TO RAGS"**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, issued the following statement regarding today's release of the President's Budget:

"The President has not only killed the goose that laid the golden egg, the economic surplus that brought the strongest economy in history, he is dancing on its grave by short-changing some of the government's most important programs such as Medicare, budget aid for state and local governments, and the Social Security Trust Fund.

The budget is particularly cold-hearted when it comes to matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the Judiciary Committee. It takes billions from the law enforcement and social programs that everyday Americans rely on and gives them to his contributors in the form of tax cuts for the richest among us. In particular, election reform, the Community Oriented Policing Program (COPS), and the Violence Against Women programs take harsh and undue hits under the President's proposal.

First and foremost is the funding shortfall for election reform. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 provided over \$1 billion for election reform. We are actually more likely to need at least \$1.5 billion, since under the Senate passed omnibus budget, we will be \$500 million short of the authorized figure. So the President involved in the most contentious election in history is giving us only one third of what we need this year to comply with Congress' will and improve this vital organ of democracy. Under his budget it will be next to impossible for states to buy the machines, hire the workers, and educate the voters in a manner that will avoid a repeat of the 2000 election debacle.

Second, as first responders, COPS are on the front lines of our war on terrorism; it defies logic that the President would zero out hiring funds for this important program. The President attempts to justify this by saying the 'impact [of COPS-funded officers] on crime is unclear,' totally disregarding the historic decreases in crime it brought about in the Clinton Administration. If President Bush is unclear about the benefits of COPS and community policing, he should speak with the countless local governments and police organizations that have praised COPS as an invaluable crime-fighting program.

Third, the President has completely undermined the law in keeping the Justice Department's Violence Against Women Office (VAWO) in the Office of Justice Programs instead of a higher and more independent position required by Congress. The Justice Department reauthorization law from the 107th Congress makes it clear that VAWO should be under the supervision of a director and the Attorney General. With this proposal, the President is thumbing his nose at Congress and victims of violence."